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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, NEA/PI, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA,  
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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION - ELECTIONS: ELECTORAL DISTRICTS,  
WOMEN IN THE PARLIAMENT, ORGANIZED WORK, HOW TO CHOOSE

Block Quotes

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Thursday, June 22, 2006

-- Under the headline "Hallucinating General," columnist Mr. Nabeel Al-Fadhel wrote in conservative Arabic daily Al-Watan: "If many former MPs were re-elected in the upcoming formation of the national assembly, then this would be an indication that women's votes were useless and ineffective. In that case, the opinion of Islamists who were opposed to women's political participation, and who maintained that women should not play a role in politics would be right. To those who are in favor of this opinion we say: 'we have faith in the wisdom and strong character of Kuwaiti women. We are confident that their ability to make the right choice is far superior to that of Kuwaiti men.' We are expecting women's votes to make the faces of those who opposed her political freedom disappear from the national assembly. Women will leave their fingerprint on this election. June 29 will be the decisive measure of who was right or who was wrong."

-- Conservative Arabic daily Al-Qabas published an Op-Ed by Mr. Hamed Al-Hmoud, under the headline "Why do Kuwaitis want to reduce the number of electoral districts?" Mr. Al-Hmoud opined, "The current division of electoral districts ought to be taught at universities on how to utilize democracy to fight democratic values. Despite the fact that Kuwaitis in general enjoy a good life and have one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, Kuwait still suffers from hidden ethnic and tribal loyalties that become vivid only during elections. These tribal, clan, family, and ethnic divisions are re-enforced by the current political process. The system has been set up to undermine any national or patriotic sentiments among people. The aim of these divisions is to strengthen tribal, clan, or family loyalties in small communities, and weaken any collective feelings of a national identity. As proof of this, we witnessed that 5 of the 25 districts have already decided on who is going to win seats in these districts; the decision has been reached even before Election Day."

-- Dr. Wael Al-Hasawi, a Shiite political activist and a columnist in independent Arabic daily Al-Rai Al-Aam questioned how people should chose the right candidate on Election Day. With the headline "Tell me whom to chose?!" Dr. Al-Hasawi concluded, "We believe that the ideal measure should be the candidate's religious commitment and ethical conduct. These character norms will prevail on Election Day. Many people these days are making claims that they are righteous individuals. However, when making a choice we must take into consideration character measures and evaluate the candidate's

behavior at home and work as well as how he or she treats people in addition to whether or not they were honest and refused to be involved in vote buying. How committed are they to their religion?"

-- In a commentary titled "The Beginning of Organized Work," that appeared in the moderate Arabic daily Al-Qabas Dr. Abdul Mohsen Yousef Jamal observed, "I see that political participation in Kuwait has begun to take the form of organized work. This new development is evident in the slogans and colors.... This is the first time that Kuwait has witnessed young men and women carrying orange symbols and banners with pride, and going door to door in Kuwait's districts collecting votes for their candidates. These candidates come from every walk of life. They are Sunnis and Shiites, rural and urban. This is a novel phenomenon in Kuwait that we should study and analyze."

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